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**SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS**  
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this committee. My name is Richard Novotny and I am the Executive Director of the Maryland Saltwater Sportfishermen's Association (MSSA). The MSSA is composed of approximately 7,000 conservation-minded members who fish the East Coast. Although we are a Maryland based organization, we have many members throughout the mid-Atlantic region.

We urge this Committee to keep re-authorizing the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. This act has demonstrated to be the most effective management tool in the protection and preservation of the Nation's marine resources. Since its passage, regional fishery management councils are required to determine if overfishing is occurring. They are then required to submit measures to end overfishing and rebuild those stocks determined to be overfished. In the annual report to congress by NMFS of the 2000 fishing season NMFS has indicated that 92 stocks were found to be overfished while 145 stocks were determined not to be overfished. There are approximately 600 fish stocks whose status is either unknown or undefined. However, approximately 83 percent of these stocks are considered to be very minimal in landings or economic value.

In their annual review of the conditions of U.S. fisheries acting NOAA Administrator, Scott Gudes, said "the status of many U.S. marine fish stocks improved in 2000, although some stocks continue to have problems. This shows us that while we've made some significant gains we must also continue to work with the regional fishery management councils to reduce the number of overfished stocks and comply more fully with strong conservation standards enacted in 1996".

Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has done a very credible job in gaining valuable scientific data concerning their fisheries. The best example of this data collection that we can think of would be Maryland's Young of the Year Survey for Striped Bass. This survey has been conducted since 1954 to monitor the reproduction of striped bass stocks along the East Coast that spawn in the Chesapeake Bay. By Maryland providing this valuable information to NMFS and other federal agencies such as the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) comprehensive fishery management plans have been developed for striped bass stocks on the East Coast. Working together monitoring scientific data from other states' surveys and establishing data concerning fishing mortality has helped bring the striped bass stocks back to a recovered fishery and is no longer listed as a threatened species. This amazing turnaround of the striped bass stocks could not have been accomplished in such a short period of time without all agencies cooperation.

Maryland DNR has also established an angler survey for their striped bass fishery. This is a volunteer survey conducted with our association and several other fishing organizations to submit catch reports after

each striped bass fishing trip. The survey includes recording the size of the first twenty fish caught, fish health, location, number of fish caught or released, number of anglers, method of fishing, and fishing from boat or land. This valuable information when analyzed will allow the State of Maryland to accurately account for their recreational harvest. In turn this information can be distributed to ASMFC's science and statistical committees to help quantify Maryland's recreational catch.

The greatest problem concerning our fish stocks is overfishing. One measure to control overfishing is for federal agencies working along with each state to control harvest. Scientific data must be obtained concerning fishing mortality and stock composition and abundance. Knowing these factors can help NMFS, ASMFC and councils establish meaningful fishery management plans.

We are sure that all states are willing to share their knowledge and management tools in having sustainable fisheries. After all it's best to get first hand assessment of the resource by the ones who are close to the day to day management of the resource. Sharing information and scientific data concerning fish stocks would only help in the management of the resource on a national level. Yes, some fish stocks may only pertain to local areas or states, yet many species know no state boundaries. These various stocks travel up and down the coast on a very predictable migratory pattern.

Migrating stocks are not only in state waters but are found in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Our fish stocks are a finite resource and must have the protection from being overfished. NMFS is charged with the stewardship of our precious fish stocks and only through the cooperation of each state participating in the fishery can we control their future. To help in the cooperative management of the resource states must submit total landings for each species either by the commercial or recreational sector. Other additional necessary data would be the size composition of the catch, the number of individuals participating in the various fisheries and the numbers and weight of fish harvested. Gaining this type of scientific data will enable NMFS to establish meaningful regulations to control fishing mortality.

We would like to take this opportunity to comment on the composition of the councils. When the councils were first established we understood the need for over-loading them with commercial fishermen. Councils had to incorporate many new regulations concerning the commercial fishery harvest. Gear type, areas, minimum size limits, and harvest were a few of the variables that had to be established. However, since that time the recreational fishery has grown by leaps and bounds. In a 1997 study conducted by NMFS they stated that there were nearly 17 million recreational anglers who made 68 million fishing trips to bolster the U.S. economy to the tune of \$108.4 billion. Now with the recreational fishing community being so dominating in numbers and economic value they must have a stronger voice in the policy and decision making in our nation's fishery. We ask that this committee investigate the current composure of our councils in reference to our questions to correct the bias shown toward the commercial industry. It is time for councils to have a broader representation for the public interest, recreational, commercial and conservation groups. Please remember that we are talking about a public resource that belongs to all citizens of the United States.

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